

Until I Drown

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Until I Drown

by [WordsAblaze](#)

Summary

“Hann...” he breathes, not sure whether his words can be heard over the way his lungs are screaming in pain. Chilled hands twist his body and cup his face, and Will shivers as a feather-light thumb traces the wound on his cheek. His eyes flutter open, and meet the dark concern staring fondly at him.

“I’m here. That was... a cruel trick,” Hannibal murmurs, glancing briefly down to Will’s lips.

Will swallows, the action sharp and loud, and attempts to smile. “You would—you would know all ab—out those, wouldn’t... you?”

Notes

love crime started playing as i sat down to write this so what choice did i have ?

day 14 prompts used: water inhalation / "just hold on"

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

It's beautiful.

And it's still beautiful as they fall.

It's still beautiful as their gazes meet and Hannibal offers up the softest smile that has ever been sent his way.

It's still beautiful when Will closes any remaining distance between them and presses their lips together in lieu of a verbal confession.

It's still beautiful as he commits Hannibal's expression to memory whilst twisting their bodies so his back is to the shadow of the ocean below them.

It's beautiful, right up until—.

“Will!”

—he. Can't. Breathe.

“Will!”

He. Can't. Breathe.

“Will, please. Please, please, *please* .”

There's something wrong with those words, and Will forces himself to swim towards them, to get to the bottom of the unsettling feeling stalking towards whatever is left of his soul, to urge his lungs back into motion so can follow the instructions he's being given.

He thinks he hears someone laugh—or possibly cry—as he does so, but he doesn't get a moment to dwell on it before his stomach violently jerks and he's coughing and spluttering and gasping as though he were a fish plucked out of the water.

“I've got you, Will. You must... endure just a little longer. There you go...”

Will groans, tears burning their way down his face as he heaves and heaves and heaves and heaves until his throat gives up on him and his muscles lose the strength to keep him even vaguely upright. Except they don't need to, because he's caged safely within strong arms, his head settling with ease on someone's shoulder as he slumps backwards against their chest.

The world smells like salt and he can't tell if it's salt from the ocean or his eyes. The chest behind him rises and falls a little too unevenly to be a pattern, and Will can't help but compare the sensation to a boat rising and falling in a storm. His head swims as he tries to make sense of how there's still any life left inside him, but he's never been great at existentialism, scientific or not, so he shifts his focus externally.

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feather-light thumb traces the wound on his cheek. His eyes flutter open, and meet the dark concern staring fondly at him.

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Will swallows, the action sharp and loud, and attempts to smile. “You would—you would know all ab—out those, wouldn’t... you?”

Hannibal doesn’t get a chance to reply, because Will’s body throws him forwards, water spewing inelegantly from his mouth as he gags, feeling as though each of his organs are being scraped raw in repeated attempts to remove any trace of the ocean from them.

He’s sobbing by the time Hannibal’s embrace returns, his eyes squeezed shut as a hand cards slowly through his hair and a firm kiss is planted on his glistening forehead. He groans, tucking his head in the crook of Hannibal’s neck, where it’s safe, and breathing an apology into Hannibal’s pale skin.

“You’ll be okay,” Hannibal whispers with certainty, “I will... take care of you. Of us.”

Will thinks *he* should be the one making such promises, because only one of them had been shot, and, although his insides are repeatedly turning themselves inside out, they are still very much intact. He starts to try and communicate that, but a jagged wave of pain crashes through him and he cries out, his hands fisting tightly around Hannibal’s shirt.

“Just... hold on for me, Will. Can you—can you do that?”

Abruptly, he realises what had been wrong with the words earlier, and what is still so very wrong about them: they’re unsteady. Hannibal’s *voice* is unsteady and, amongst the dozen things wrong with the situation they’ve found themselves in, *that* is what has alarm bells going off in Will’s head. Hannibal is many things but *unsteady* has never been—should never be—one of them.

“I should,” Will manages, lifting his head, “take... care of *you* .”

Hannibal’s forehead pushes against his own, and Will shivers so hard his bones ache. “You were. Magnificent. I fear your trick was... crueller to you... than it was to me.”

Will’s lungs struggle against his ribs but he doesn’t let that stop him from replying. “Not... a trick. You w—were shot.”

“My clever Will,” Hannibal, despite also breathing heavily, somehow manages to sound nothing less than *reverent* . “You need—need not protect me. Anymore.”

Will frowns, using an extortionate amount of energy to peel his eyes open and scan Hannibal’s face for any hidden implications. When he doesn’t find a morbid one, reassured that his efforts haven’t been in vain and the other man isn’t about to die on him, he nods, then winces when sparks of agony erupt behind his eyelids. “I... I trust... you.”

No sooner than the words leave his mouth do his lungs throw a tantrum, the world switching to static as he cries out again, more of the ocean tumbling from his lips as he burns from inside out, shivering hard enough to jostle each of his wounds back to life. An angry sort of life that has Will sinking into an angry sort of darkness.

The darkness doesn't stay angry for long, but it refuses to leave altogether, and Will gets only small glimpses at a time. Glimpses of Hannibal glancing down at him, his eyes glinting with uncharacteristically obvious concern. Glimpses of Abigail beside him, her hand nestled in his as blood flows down her neck. Glimpses of Chiyoh muttering something to herself, her eyebrows furrowed as something presses against his side. Glimpses of Beverly in front of him, each section of her corpse bleeding and screaming. Eventually, Will lets go of the glimpses, unsure which of them are even real, and begs the darkness to keep a tighter leash.

"I—can't—" he gasps.

He doesn't understand what's happening. He doesn't understand why his insides are reacting so violently to the same saltwater he's been foraging in for most of his life. Each of his organs *burn* and his eyes feel as though they've been shoved into an oven and he can't stop shaking, his fingers twitching uselessly at nothing. He thinks the inferno of pain might have been beautiful, had it not been so *very* painful .

"You *can* . And... and you *will*. "

The darkness doesn't seem to agree.

Unfortunately, but also very fortunately, Hannibal seems to be fighting *against* the darkness for once, and his unsteady voice drags Will back from its edge, again and again and again and again and again.

He can't make out the words through the haze of pain—later, he'll realise he'd had no chance of doing so anyway because they'd been in Lithuanian—but nor does he need to, drawn in enough by their familiar cadence and curious enough about their unfamiliar content to just about keep the darkness at bay.

End Notes

* peace sign *

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